



M E D I A R E L E A S E

STATE OF TENNESSEE
DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE AND INSURANCE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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CONSUMER AFFAIRS WARNS USED CAR BUYERS TO BEWARE OF HURRICANE FLOOD-DAMAGED VEHICLES

Nashville, TN. - The Tennessee Division of Consumer Affairs would like to warn consumers in the market for a used car to be on alert for flood-damaged vehicles that may have originated from the Gulf states as a result of Hurricanes Katrina and Rita.

Due to these hurricanes, thousands of submerged vehicles were abandoned in Louisiana, Mississippi, Alabama, and Texas, and were shipped to other parts of the country through car wholesalers.

"We want consumers to be cautious of these scams and make sure they research before buying a used car," said Mary Clement, Director for the Tennessee Division of Consumer Affairs. "We are here to help consumers who have been affected by unfair business practices and help them understand their rights and responsibilities, resolve complaints through the mediation process, investigate violations of the state Consumer Protection Act, and to clarify consumer protection laws."

Taking these extra precautions can save you time and money when buying a used vehicle:

1. **Buyers Beware!** While most states require vehicle titles to indicate flood damage, some wholesalers may intentionally transfer titles to avoid having the damage noted and diminish the value of the car.
2. **Looks can be deceiving.** While the car may look perfectly fine on the surface, there could be hidden defects that are not immediately noticeable. Flood damage can compromise the car's computer and safety mechanisms, which pose significant safety hazards to the new owner.
3. **Do your own inspection.** Take the time to inspect and do the following: check the engine for a high water mark on the block or radiator, which is a clear indication that the car has been flooded, look for rust or corrosion on wires and other components under the hood, and be suspicious if the carpet smells damp and of mildew.
4. **Consider where you buy.** Flooded vehicles oftentimes end up at car auctions, so make sure to shop at a reputable dealership.
5. **Ask questions.** Before buying the car, ask the dealer to obtain a report with a detailed history of the car. You should also consider taking the car to a qualified mechanic to inspect the vehicle thoroughly. You can find comprehensive vehicle history reports for free from a variety of sources, including www.carfax.com, www.autocheck.com, and www.auto.consumerguide.com.

If you would like to file a complaint, please feel free to call Consumer Affairs toll-free at 1-800-342-8385 or visit www.state.tn.us/consumer.

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